

February 19, 2015 – **Harassment and intimidation by Navy personnel**

From <http://westcoastactionalliance.org>

This post is a difficult one, because it is profoundly disturbing. Since autumn of 2014, when citizens began speaking up to question the Navy's goal of converting much of the Olympic Peninsula into an Electronic Warfare Range, (including Olympic National Park and Forest plus private lands,) numerous unpleasant comments by Navy pilots and other Navy personnel have begun arriving in various in-boxes and on comment sites in public forums. Because many of those comments have been surprisingly arrogant and even hateful, and because some people have felt personally threatened, a group of citizens began to document the comments. Congressman Derek Kilmer was notified last autumn about a large number of comments by Navy personnel, including the first few listed below, made to a Facebook page called Protect Olympic Peninsula. He took immediate action, and the comments ceased for awhile, but not for long. Whidbey Island Naval Air Station Base Commander Michael Nortier and Congressman Rick Larsen were notified late in 2014 about a pilot who was encouraging a woman distraught over the constant jet noise to commit suicide, but no acknowledgement was ever received from either Larsen or Nortier, and the comments from that pilot did not stop. With regard to our two silent Senators, residents of the Olympic Peninsula feel as if they've been thrown under the bus.

After the Port Townsend City Council expressed opposition, via its NEPA comment letter, to the constant flyovers and impacts to the economy as well as the lack of transparent process, a Navy person created a number of Facebook pages, including one called "Boycott Port Townsend and Al Jazeera." That same Navy person continues to write vitriolic letters to the editor of a local Whidbey Island newspaper, plus many comments in other public forums, that have repeatedly libeled an American reporter and claimed that a private citizen whom he has also repeatedly named but has never met was "colluding with Al Jazeera" and was a direct threat to 30,000 jobs on Whidbey Island. Besides publicly slandering these people by name as well as libeling citizen organizations throughout the area, an argument could easily be made about this Navy person's intent to have some readers mistake "Al Jazeera" for "Al Qaeda" and be incited to act violently against these people. Despite knowing the email addresses of the two private citizens libeled by name in those letters, this Whidbey Island newspaper chose not to notify them that such letters had been published.

Protecting the Olympic Peninsula's unique and famously quiet ecosystem is important to the people who live here and to those who visit here, too. But so is protecting the region's vibrant tourism economy and property values. All are threatened by the Navy's activities. Public opposition to what's being forced upon us is not anti-Navy or NIMBY or unpatriotic, it is merely trying to say there must be limits to what we allow to be destroyed, especially when so many alternative training areas exist for these Navy activities. Sometimes disagreeing with the status

quo is more patriotic than going along with it. Unfortunately, enough Navy personnel have demonstrated their willingness to bully citizens into intimidated silence that in communities on the Olympic Peninsula, public opinion of the Navy itself has plummeted.

On the afternoon of February 17, a Navy person in uniform approached a small group of citizens who were sitting at a table on the Port Townsend-Keystone ferry quietly discussing the Navy's activities. In an otherwise empty ferry lounge, the man made several passes past their table to photograph them, then sat down next to them and began recording their conversation on his smartphone. The effects of such intimidating behavior are chilling. Since American citizens pay US Navy salaries, and pay for the aircraft they fly, and for the infrastructure they use, it will become sadly obvious when you read these comments that things are way out of balance when it comes to attitude. It's time for the public to be aware of this kind of behavior. Here are some, but not all, of the documented comments directed by Navy personnel at various citizens who have spoken up. The WCAA does not plan to release names or email addresses except to a law enforcement investigation.

2014-10-31, comments from a Navy pilot on the Protect Olympic Peninsula

Facebook page: "I can't believe I protect you morons. I can't believe I'm going to respond... you know we've been doing this stuff for decades, right? You're just looking for something to rail against. I'll take a simple "Thank You" and you can go back to handing out your tin foil hats."

2014-11-01, citizen response letter to pilots making numerous sarcastic and intimidating comments such as the above, on the Protect Olympic Peninsula

Facebook Page: "Dear Navy pilots who are using this public information page to name-call and tell us the Navy does not need to ask for permission to expand its activity into public lands we cherish: We are here because we were left out of what is supposed to by law be a public process under The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA.) We had the right to know what the Navy is planning, via its Environmental Assessment, BEFORE the comment period closed. We did not like being told, Sorry, too late, you missed it, after finding out the Navy had placed not one single public notice in local newspapers that serve our communities. We do not like the fact that the Navy had planned no public meetings or hearings in the affected areas until Congressman Derek Kilmer insisted on it. Like anyone else, you have the right to express your views here, but you do not have the right to question our intelligence, our motives, or our patriotism. We in turn have the right to not agree with you that loud jet noise 260 days a year is fine and dandy in a National Park or Forest, or over our communities. Many of us in these communities have served our country, too. We have enough reminders every day of the disturbing militarization of this country, from public lands to police forces to political attitudes, that feed a seemingly endless demand for war. Many of us are old enough to remember other times, for comparison. By objecting to the use of these magnificent wild places for such intensive training, we are not questioning your own dedication

or service to our country. We are here because we take our own citizenship very seriously.”

2014-11-01, reply to above from a Navy pilot: “You can submit whatever comments you want, but the majority of the comments are, “We hate the military industrial complex.” Although that’s very insightful, they aren’t the type of comments that we (or anyone else) takes seriously. We’ve been there before, and that line stretches around the block. No one who makes decisions cares about comments like that.”

2014-12-20, Retired Navy Chief replies to other Navy personnel criticizing the three civilians who responded in the Whidbey Island News-Times to a misleading op-ed by NASWI Commander Michael Nortier: “I think the [letter writers] should be strapped into a GROWLER and sent out to relieve a crew currently in combat over ISIS stronghold of their choice and allowed to demonstrate their superior knowledge and “airmanship” and guts for the rest of us!

2014-12-22, by email from a pilot: “Thanks for your expertise on how the military should work. The military is doing it’s job fighting overseas terrorists and silly people at home. The Military doesn’t answer to you. It answers to elected civilians like the President – not every lunatic with an opinion. Navy is exempt from most of the environmental laws you speak of and for obvious reasons. Fighter jets are not and never will be a Prius. Nor do Navy fighter pilots drive Priuses. We consider them to be wimpy along with their owners. New Growlers coming starting in February. New facilities being built on Nas every week. We’re growing. Not shrinking. And we just bought more land around OLF [Outlying Landing Field.] COER [Citizens of Ebey’s Reserve, Whidbey Island] is about to lose their homes to eminent domain.”

2014, Christmas Eve, from a pilot: “We’re going to keep punishing you every day. You are not oppressed black people. You are rich white people who got bought property that you new was in a noise zone. So the beatings will continue until your stupidity improves.”

2014, Christmas Day, from a Navy pilot: “You guys hear the good news? The Navy just released a 3rd Draft EIS for the Northwest Training Complex. We’re having full scale operations over the Pacific starting this summer. Plenty of FCLPs to take pictures/videos of. 6 carrier qualification detachments planned between January and May. Enjoy the airshow, friends. We have some great flying coming up.”

2014-12-29, via reply to a comment from an elderly Lopez Island woman on a public comment site, saying that she was sitting in front of her screen waiting for a sensible response to what had been a “god awful day of noise” on the southern end of Lopez Island. She admitted, “I am thinking suicide when my life and health are impacted so severely. Today the planes were active from 6 am till 10 pm. My entire body is pulsing with frayed nerve sensation. I keep thinking of hell.” **Reply to her from Navy pilot:** “SOOOOOOOOOO DRAMATIC. SOOOOOOOOO Sad. If I were you,

I too would just end it all. What a whiner! Stanby, because it's going to be a busy spring with all the new jets. You are not alone. There are 150 other idiots who are going to keep getting punished for not researching where they bought discount property. 15 more Growlers start arriving in Feb. Next year, even more. So I would find some mental toughness now because the jets aren't going anywhere.

2015-01-16, by email from a Navy pilot: "I assure you that you will be long gone before the Growlers are. Service life of the Growlers – 40-45 years. And man, we just built some beautiful new facilities on NAS Whidbey. WA is the absolute best state for military airspace. Wide open skies in unpopulated areas. You are not important. In fact, you scumbags are completely expendable."

2015-January, on the Protect Olympic Peninsula Facebook page, by a Navy person who created a new Facebook page called Boycott Port Townsend and Al Jazeera: "Word is spreading rapidly – Port Townsend is NOT a destination point for the 100K+ Navy personnel, families and retirees who reside in Kitsap, Jefferson, Island and King County. We will not spend our money in a location that is using a media firestorm to deny traditional training areas – where not a SINGLE legal claim of "damage" has EVER been filed."

2015-January, via another Facebook page created to support Naval Air Station Whidbey Island; comment from the same Navy person as above: "The Port Townsend City Council commissioned [citizen's name], who colluded with a 2nd rate Al Jazeera "journalist" on the "Truthout" hit piece, to write a 5 page letter that falsely contested every aspect of the current Navy EIS. This is all about a few elitists – many who never actually visit the National Forest – who are anti-Navy and anti-Jobs. Find a new hobby."

2015-01-14, by email from a Navy pilot: "Ha! ...[Rep.] Derek Kilmer single handedly helped vote to bring more Growlers to Whidbey. Just like [Rep.] Rick Larsen. And they're all coming! Too bad the Navy already owns the airspace. Tough break. Hey, why don't you guys write more letters to Rick Larsen and claim to be retired military officers. ... The difference between us and you is, when military/retired military call our Congressman, they actually take the phone call."

2015-01-16, via email from a Navy pilot: "...we already own all the airspace, and there's absolutely nothing you can do about that... The Growlers fly there every single day from 6000 ft – 35,000 feet. Good news, we put up 2 new dart boards in the Officers' Club. Guess who's faces are on them – [2 citizens named]. So congratulations, we through darts at your faces every single day over a beer. That's how much the Navy respects your group."

2015-01-16, via email from a Navy pilot: "[Rep.] Rick Larsen just helped buy even more Growlers. And it's time for the Navy to buy your houses and bulldoze them. I think it would be a great time to extend the OLF runway right into Admiral's Cove. Time for COER [Citizens of Ebey's Reserve] to move. Eminent domain is a beautiful thing."

2015-01-18, via email response to a letter to the editor on the California Coastal Commission, which has rejected a Navy explosives and sonar training program off the Southern California coast that critics said could harm endangered blue whales and other sea life: "...the commission as its called has no actual authority. And the Navy executed every one of its training missions in the Pacific last year. The Navy doesn't answer to this commission. In fact, they did the exact opposite of what the commission "demanded."